

Children's Booklist Shocking

(Continued from Page 1, Column 2)

ians' influence to the teachers, with "kids" actually making the choices for book clubs such as *Scholastic* on the basis not of what they should like but rather on what they do like. This accounts for the steady deterioration in taste (and quite possibly, in conduct) which we see on every side. This is a trend that threatens the quality of a young reader's life. And the shift, one might add, is not only from the librarian to the teacher but from the teacher to the drug store display. The person who buys books as gifts can help reverse this shift.

Weird Titles

Some of the themes elaborated on in the books listed in the Times Book Section are so dreary that they are absurd: *The Mimosa Tree* is laid in rural, white North Carolina; the crops have been hit by a blight; the Profitt family's pigs have been poisoned by a neighbor; they have an epileptic friend. (Somehow the author could not work in reference to the bomb that fell on Hiroshima!).

Then there is another example: *Simon and the Game of Chance*. It has "truth, humor and pathos." Don't forget pathos — anything to make Christmas merry!

Some of the topics are so lurid that they seem inappropriate in the celebration of Christ's birth. One such is *V.D. Facts You Should Know*. "Almost 100,000 people infected by syphilis each year; 1,500,000 infected by gonorrhea. Frank, implicit, tastefully written." What an exciting way to start Christmas morning with a tastefully written book on V.D.

Or perhaps you would prefer one of three books on pregnant girls: *Phoebe, Yesterday's Child* or *The Longest Weekend*. The possibilities would seem to be endless. Finally there is *Are You There God?* — a real teen story with stirrings of desire unencumbered by narrow-focused sex, it says. Perhaps this teen age girl should read the preceding three books. Or, it might just be simpler to declare a moratorium on book publishing for the young folks until we gain some perspective.

A run-down of other books mentioned includes *The Black BC's*, the many ways in which black people and their culture have enriched American life. Don't bother to look for a book pointing out the Anglo-Saxon contributions (our language and legal system). But you will find one — *Feast of the Serpent* — which treats of Cromwell's Civil War and a young girl who finds herself accused of being a witch.

And would you believe it, they are still fighting the Nazis: *Code Polonaise* is the story of a band of children moving through Warsaw's ruins, resisting Nazi conquerors. No publisher seems to want to put out a book on the children of the officers executed in that mass grave in the Katyn Forest. Perhaps that would be too harrowing a theme for Christmas. But there is another "hate" book (the kind that makes Liberals so resentful when their toes are stepped on): *His Enemy; His Friend* — a story of occupied France. A German soldier befriends a boy whose father he later helps to execute as a hostage. How's that for a twist? And there is a third hair-raiser: *Frederick*, set in Nazi Germany between 1925 and 1940.

Whenever anti-Nazi themes pall, there is always the South to be belabored. Thus *The Rock and the Willow* has a girl growing up in a large, very poor farm family in Alabama during the Depression and living through rain and drought. *To Be a Slave* is the other side of the coin, being a narrative of men, women and children who underwent slavery in Africa and then in America.

Nip and Tuck Battle

It is really nip and tuck between the bad Nazis and our own bad Establishment — with our own society getting perhaps the worst deal of all: *Henry 3* is suburbia as



CESAR CHAVEZ, radical would-be representative of the California grape pickers, whose unlawful efforts to force organized unionism on unwilling grape pickers has brought near economic chaos to the grape growers, and victimized and antagonized the workers. The well paid grape pickers, groaning under a five year strike, fear constant union violence and heartless destruction of their property.

seen through the eyes of a bright boy — the son of a successful corporation executive who takes a hard look at his parents' life style and decides he'll never compromise himself for social position. (Why must he be compromised, one asks, thinking of great and successful men like the noted philanthropist, George Eastman). *No Promises in the Wind* depicts a boy and his younger brother hitchhiking, riding freights, etc. What grist for Soviet Russia and our enemies in Hanoi! And *Run Softly, Go Fast* is the saga of a young runaway from the Establishment (as described in the advertisement's own words). Then there is *Groner*, an 11-year-old boy whose mother commits suicide and who must handle the resulting instability of the father. *Ox* is the story of a kid at the top: affluence and alcoholism in the family; a very fat, unhappy boy whose wealthy father whisks him on a jet-set odyssey from Palm Beach to California. And *No Easy Answers* is the story of a young radical whose father, an Army colonel, is arrested by the Military Police for stealing a secret weapon. (And all this time, I thought the Rosenbergs did that!). Clearly, things are bad all over.

Naturally there are many books on racial themes that cast the white population in an uncomplimentary light: Thus, *Dwellers in the Tundra* is described as "a painfully honest commentary with photographs showing how the white men irretrievably changed a once proud Alaskan village into a ghetto of the frontier. (A ghetto of the frontier is quite an expression).

Indian America, on the Black Hawk War, tells the tragic story of the white man's relations with the Indians, while *Sing Down the Moon* is a Navaho story of an Indian girl and her people after Spanish slavers and white soldiers destroy their way of life. But the publishers got their signals crossed when they published *The Discoveries of Esteban the Black* who became the first man of the Old World to enter the Southwest. Let's hope he keeps the Spanish soldiers in check!



From Moshe Dayan to Satan himself — they run the gamut. Anything goes in this Christless Christmas Book review. Above drawing is taken from *All About Story Book*, a giant story book of thirteen fairy tales.

Just to show how fair we are, we mention two historical themes from our Colonial America which actually did get published: *Peggy* (who married Benedict Arnold) is described as calculating, beautiful and bitchy. Yes, these are the exact words. "Bitchy" does seem a bit indelicate for children. Then *Two If by Sea* is the story of Paul Revere and his heroic associates "with their worries and foibles" carefully included.

Would you believe it? Eleanor Frances Lattimore (wife of Dr. Owen Lattimore of the notorious Institute of Pacific Relations) has a new book, *Three Firecrackers*: and right below her advertisement is listed Millicent E. Selsam's *The Tomato and Other Fruit Vegetables*. Mrs. Selsam's *Egg to Chick* is an old-timer, advertised through many Christmas seasons. She is the wife of Howard Selsam, instructor at the Jefferson School of the Social Sciences; and her books have long been sold at the Communist Book Shop on E. 13th St., New York City. Then there is *Mazes* by Muriel Rukeyser. Anyone having access to the 1948 California Report on Un-American Activities can find additional information on Howard and Muriel.

A Sad Situation

This, then, is the situation in Children's books as offered to the Christmas trade.

They represent the choices of the best minds in the business but many of these books are negative in approach, unrepresentative and critical of our country and of our institutions — or completely irrelevant (such as *Joseph and Kosa or the Sacrifice to the Vistula* by highly promoted Isaac Bashevis Singer) in an age that demands **RELEVANCE!**

The New York Times repeatedly says **Give Books as Gifts for Children**. We urge you to read them first if you care about the influences to which their impressionable minds may be subjected. And weigh particularly whether they are fitting and proper for the season which celebrates the birth of Our Lord.

Perhaps it would be better to visit a second hand book store to find copies of Zane Grey's western tales or *Anne of Green Gables*. But to end on a note of hope, let's be grateful that Jon and Gunnar Myrdal have not yet written for the juvenile market.

"Wisdom Is Often Just
Common Sense"

Benjamin Franklin Warned Us!

"In whatever country Jews have settled in any great numbers, they have lowered its moral tone, depreciated its commercial integrity, have segregated themselves and have not been assimilated, have sneered at and tried to undermine the Christian religion, have built up a state within a state, and have, when opposed, tried to strangle that country to death financially.

"If you do not exclude them from the United States in the Constitution, in less than 200 years they will have swarmed in in such great numbers that they will dominate and devour the land and change our form of government.

"If you do not exclude them, in less than 200 years our descendants will be working in the fields to furnish the substance while they will be in the counting house rubbing their hands. I warn you, gentlemen, if you do not exclude the Jews for all time, your children will curse you in your graves. Jews, gentlemen, are Asiatics; they will never be otherwise."

The above is taken from an address delivered by Benjamin Franklin before the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787.